



SAFA Ramp Inspection Procedures

Guidance material

Template 2

Leaflet for the general public

Safety Assessment of Foreign Aircraft

Information for the general public

Introduction

The European Civil Aviation Authorities perform since 1996 ramp inspections on aircraft visiting their countries. During such an inspection, the compliance with the applicable International safety standards (issued by the International Civil Aviation Organisation [ICAO]) is checked. These inspections became mandatory for all Member States of the European Union as of April 2006. This leaflet is to explain the setup of the program.

Legal basis

Directive 2004/36/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council on the safety of third-country aircraft using Community airports sets obligations for the Member States to inspect third country aircraft (aircraft not used or operated under the control of a competent authority of a Member State) which are suspected of non-compliance with international safety standards. In addition to this obligation, Member States may also inspect EU aircraft and may inspect aircraft according to a spot-check procedure without having any suspicion of non-compliance. The Annex to this directive has been amended by Commission Directive 2008/49/EC.

The obligations set out in the above-mentioned Directive are for the EU Member States only. However, the European Aviation Safety Agency has signed working arrangements with a number of non-EU States involving them in the SAFA programme. The EU Member States and the non-EU States are therefore called together the SAFA Participating States¹³.

Which aircraft are checked?

The Participating States choose which aircraft to inspect. Besides the obligation that aircraft being suspected of non-compliance with the international safety standards shall be inspected, most Participating States carry out random inspections. Both aircraft used by EU operators and non-EU operators may be inspected.

What is checked?

A checklist of 54 inspection items is used during a SAFA Ramp Check. It is SAFA policy not to delay an aircraft except for safety reasons. As the time between arrival and departure (the turn-around time) may not be sufficient to go through the full checklist, not all 54 items might be inspected. Checks may include:

- licences of the pilots;
- procedures and manuals that should be carried in the cockpit; compliance with these procedures by flight and cabin crew;
- safety equipment in cockpit and cabin;
- cargo carried in the aircraft; and
- the technical condition of the aircraft.

The inspections carried out by the Participating States follow a common procedure and are then reported by entering them into the centralised SAFA database of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). It has to be stressed that SAFA inspections are limited to on-the-spot assessments and cannot substitute for proper regulatory oversight, therefore they cannot guarantee the airworthiness of a particular aircraft.

¹³ The 44 States engaged in the EU SAFA Programme are: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Georgia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.



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Findings and follow-up actions

A non-compliance found during an inspection is called a finding. Such findings are categorised according to the magnitude of the deviation of the requirements and to the influence on safety of the non-compliance. Minor deviations (category 1) are reported to the Pilot in Command. If an inspection identifies one or more significant deviations from the safety standards (category 2 findings), these will also be reported to the operator and its competent authority. Where non-compliances have a major impact on safety (category 3), the flight crew is in addition expected to correct such non-compliances before the aircraft departs by either correcting the deficiency or by imposing restrictions on the aircraft operations (by e.g. blocking a defective seat for its use by passengers).

Follow-up process

The Stakeholders involved in the SAFA process are the State of Inspection, the Operator, the State of Operator and the State of Registry (if different from the State of Operator). These organisations play a key role in the follow-up process after an inspection is conducted:

1. The SAFA inspector debriefs the Pilot in command and hands over the Proof of Inspection.
2. The inspector requests the pilot in command to sign a copy of the Proof of Inspection form.
3. In case of category 2 and/or 3 findings, a written communication will be send to the operator and to the competent authority overseeing the operator.
4. The operator is requested to reply to the written communication with an action plan that addresses the deficiencies.
5. The competent authority ensuring the oversight of the operator (and/or the airworthiness of the aircraft) may be asked to confirm their agreement on the corrective actions taken.
6. Findings are considered closed when the deficiencies have been satisfactorily addressed.
7. Subsequent inspections by any Participating State may occur to verify rectification of the deficiencies.

Database analysis

All reported data is stored centrally in a computerised database set up and managed by EASA. The database also holds supplementary information, such as lists of actions carried out following inspections which revealed non-compliances. The information held within this database is reviewed and analysed by EASA on a regular basis. The European Commission and Member States are informed about the results of the analysis and are advised on any identified potentially safety hazards.

Whom to contact for questions?

The Participating States are responsible for the performance of the inspections. In case of any questions resulting from an inspection, one should contact the Participating State directly. General information on the SAFA programme may be found on the website of the European Aviation Safety Agency (http://www.easa.europa.eu/ws_prod/s/s_safa.php).